JIM STEINMEYER'S

TREACHEROUS IMPUZZIBILITIES

The Latest Collection of Strangely Self-Working Conjuring

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Treacherous Impuzzibilities
The Latest Collection of Strangely Self-Working Conjuring
The Fifth Book in the Impuzzibilities Series
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TREACHEROUS IMPUZZIBILITIES

Still Another Collection of Strangely Self-Working Conjuring

By Jim Steinmeyer

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INTRODUCTION

I recently had the pleasure of sitting in a club meeting and hearing magicians discuss various tricks. "Of course, I hate mathematical tricks," a magician helpfully offered. It seemed the thing to say, with one magician after the next piling on, and the group eagerly nodding in agreement, the same way that all sensible people criticize injustice, unfairness, or the mistreatment of kittens. One magician finally provided the exclamation point: "I actually have a degree in mathematics, and I hate mathematical tricks." I had to scratch my head. What were they talking about? Presumably they were imagining some fantasy tricks in which long strings of numbers were tediously multiplied or divided under the duress of a spotlight. Saying "I hate mathematical tricks" makes as much sense as saying, "I hate houses built with a hammer," for it takes a particular perversion to think about the hammer when contemplating the finished house. If you wish, feel free to hate tricks with numbers, or tricks with mathematical calculations, or even mentalism. Don't hate the secrets, which may well turn out to be your friends.

That brings us to the following *Treacherous Impuzzibilities*. Their treachery lies in behind-the-scenes secrets, the principle and the process buried in the most innocent procedure. In this collection, I've been fortunate to feature effects derived from inventive magicians. I would especially point out a number of ingenious effects that have been adapted or derived from Eddie Joseph's wonderful mathematical tricks.

One of the great Impuzzibilities traditions consists of tricks that first fool the magician, and then fool the

audience. I would proudly say that the tradition continues on the following pages. If you want a thrill, make your way through *Treacherous Impuzzibilities* and enjoy real, old-fashioned, chill down your spine, "this-can't-possibly-work" amazement. I would point out, in particular, Thirty-Fiveism, Hacer lo Imposible, Presque Vu, and The Cowboy Secret. But there are plenty of surprises: I'm particularly proud of this assortment, and I hope that you'll take the time to examine each one. In these pages, you'll find another level of treachery, for these effects may seem comfortable and familiar, but I can assure you that one, two, or more, will quickly work their way into your repertoire—especially for those trying situations where an impromptu trick needs to dumbfound a group.

I am grateful to my good friends Marty Demarest, Neil Patrick Harris, and Ben Robinson for suggesting effects which, they knew, were suitably impuzzible for my purposes. Finally, thanks to Frankie Glass and Richard Kaufman for help with the production of this book and advice through the process. I hope, dear readers, that you can find it in your heart to accept a little bit of mathematical magic. Get out your hammers!

—Jim Steinmeyer
Burbank, California
October 2014

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1. WISHING & MAKING IT SO

Designed to be presented over the telephone (where two-way communication is possible), this "Think of a Card" effect is disarming and direct. The packet of cards seems to be a red herring; it becomes apparent that they might have very little to do with the effect, as the spectator's choice of card is completely the result of his imagination. The method relies upon the use of secret charts; it's almost like real magic.

The following description combines the presentation and the method. Unknown to the spectator, you're ready on your end of the phone with the small charts (diagrammed here) and a pencil.

I'd like to perform a card trick for you now. In order to do that, I'll need you to get a deck of cards. Do that now. Do you have them? Good. I want you to open the deck and take out twelve cards. Just twelve. Use any cards you want. In fact, it's better if you don't really look closely at the cards, just take twelve of them and hold them in a packet. You can put the rest of the deck aside. We won't be using it.

You have the cards? I'm going to ask you to hold the packet of cards face-up in your hands. In fact, throughout this trick, keep the cards face-up, so you can always see them. That will make it easier.

Give the packet a cut or two.

Of course, every card can be identified in different ways. For example, every card has a color, it has a first name, a middle name, and a last name, or family name. Let me show you. What card is on the face of the packet right now, the card you see when you look down at your hands?

The listener tells you the name of one card. Let's say, for example, that it's the Two of Hearts. As soon as

you hear the identity of this card, you write it down. (In this example, you'd write Two of Hearts.)

The original face card is: .....

Good. So, of course, every card has a color, red or black, the same way people have different colors. The first name of that card is it's value. The middle name is "Of." And the last name, the family name, is the suit.

(Here the patter is tailored to the face card that's just been named.)

Keep the cards closed tightly in your hands. I don't want you to look at any of the other cards. But I want you to select a card. Any card. Do it in your imagination. Just think of a card. To make it easier, avoid the royal cards, the Jacks, Queens, or Kings. Because we just want to use the number values of cards. Ace through Ten.

And don't use the card on the face right now, since we talked about that card. Do you have one? Don't tell me what it is. It's only in your imagination. Of course, that card may also be in the packet in your hands. I can't tell.

I want you to start by spelling the color of the card. You'll do this by moving one card, from the top, the face, of the packet to the bottom, for each letter. In other words, if you're thinking of a red card, you'd move cards from the top to the bottom, spelling R... E... D....

So do that now. Red or black. Don't let me hear how many cards you're moving.

Have you done that? Good. Hold the packet tightly in your hands. Now I want you to do the same thing, but you're going to count the value of the card. Ace means one. Whatever number value you're thinking of, you should move those cards, one-by-one, from the top to the bottom. Again, do it quietly so I can't guess how many cards are moving.

Now I want you take a look at all the cards. Listen to the instructions. You're going to keep the cards face-up,

and deal them, one-by-one, from the packet into one pile on the table. One card on top of the next card. As you deal them, you'll name each card. Don't say anything if you see the card you're thinking about.

So do that now. Tell me the first card.... And then the second.... And just keep going....

The listener names all twelve cards, for the first time. As he does, you secretly write the values of the twelve cards onto the dotted lines on this chart.

Card 1:	.....	face card here means **RED 9** or **BLACK 7**
2:	.....	face card here means **RED 8** or **BLACK 6**
3:	.....	face card here means **RED 7** or **BLACK 5**
4:	.....	face card here means **RED 6** or **BLACK 4**
5:	.....	face card here means **RED 5** or **BLACK 3**
6:	.....	face card here means **RED 4** or **BLACK 2**
7:	.....	face card here means **RED 3** or **BLACK A**
8:	.....	face card here means **RED 2**
9:	.....	face card here means **RED A**
10:	.....	face card here means **BLACK 10**
11:	.....	face card here means **BLACK 9**
12:	.....	face card here means **RED 10** or **BLACK 8**

After writing down the twelve cards, quickly refer to the original face card, which you've written down, and locate it on the list. Circle this line. You'll notice the information on the right side of the chart. The location of the face card instantly tells you something about the card selected, narrowing down the possible colors and values.

Good. That was the first time you've actually been able to see the cards in your hand, and of course, I've had no idea what cards you picked out of the deck. Pick up the packet on the table, and square up all the cards again. Keep them face-up, just as before. I want you to continue mixing them. Now spell the middle name of the card, "Of," transferring cards from the top to the bottom as you spell O... F.... Good. And finally spell the family name of the card, the suits. You'll spell, "Clubs," "Diamonds," "Hearts," or "Spades," depending on what card you're thinking about. Spell the whole name, even the "S" on the end. Do that now.

By chance, you've now ended up with a card on the face of the packet, a card that you're looking at. Tell me what that card is.

When you hear the new face card, quickly compare it to the previous chart. The new face card comes from the previous position 5, 4, or 2, according to the following chart:

If the new face card was just	
Card 5	..... the selected card has to be a **CLUB**
If the new face card was just	
Card 4	... the selected card has to be a **HEART** or **SPADE**
If the new face card was just	
Card 2	..... the selected card has to be a **DIAMOND**

With the information from the two charts, you now know the possible values and colors, and the suits. Comparing both charts allows you to determine the thought-of selection exactly.

It would be amazing if your card were on the face of the packet, wouldn't it? Yes, it would. That would have been a miracle. Since you just imagined the card, I couldn't have known if it was one of the cards in your hand.

Look at the larger chart, determining if the selected card is in the spectator's hand, then slowly reveal the identity of the card.

Even though you mixed the cards in random ways, your concentration has allowed me to pick up a mental picture. The color, the value, and the name. Let's start with the name. I clearly get the impression of the name, "Of." Am I right? That was the easy part. I might be able to do a little better than that.

Begin by revealing the information of whether the spectator is actually holding his card, then the color of the card, the suit, and finally the value.

2. CHICAGOISM

Eddie Joseph's eponymous stand-up card trick, Jasonism (he also worked under the name Eddie Jason), was described in the September 1946 *Sphinx* Magazine. The original routine depended upon the magician's handling of the cards, making adjustments as he was blindfolded. This liberal adaptation is well-suited to a hands-off presentation, as over a telephone or on video. I've added the neat face-up, face-down mix in the middle, a curious variation on the shuffle from Enigmatic Poker, which first appeared in *Subsequent Impuzzibilities*.

I'd like to try an experiment with you. It's an experiment in astral projection. At least, that's what psychics call it. It's when you close your eyes, you imagine yourself somewhere else. And then you try to figure out where the imagination stopped and reality began.

We're going to see if we can make an astral connection. Not here. Not right now. We're going to connect in two far-away places that we're just imagining. And we're going to prove that we've made a connection because you're going to give me some information when we meet. Here's how it works. You'll need a deck of cards. Get those now.

Good. I'd like you to take twenty cards out of the deck. That should be the perfect number. We don't need too many, as you're going to be counting through the cards.

Do you have exactly twenty cards in your hands? Good. Put the rest of the deck aside. We won't need it.

I want you to think of a number between one and twenty. Any number at all. You're not going to tell me that number; that's your secret number. Holding the packet face-down in your hands, I want you to count down to the card that's at your number. In other words, if you were thinking of ten, you'd count down and look at the tenth card. When you see it, remember that card. Then close up the packet again, keeping the card exactly where you found it. In other words, I don't want you to move that card. It should still be at your secret position.

Of course, it's a miracle if we can make any sort of astral connection, because we're doing this through an electronic medium. But I'm going to imagine myself in a city somewhere, and I want you to imagine yourself in a city. We're going to mix up the cards, based on our choices.

So let's start this way: I want you to deal cards, one-by-one, from the top of the packet into a pile on the table. I want you to spell the name of my city, Chicago. Deal one card for each letter. C... H... I... C... A... G... O. Good. Now you have a small packet of cards on the table, right? Keep holding the cards in your hand, face-down.

I want you to take that packet on the table and turn the whole packet over. Just turn it face-up.

You've still got a packet of cards in your hands; I want you to turn them face-up as well. Now I want you to deal, face-up, one card after another as you spell the name of another city. But this time, it's your choice. Any city you want. Deal one card for each letter, on top of the cards that are already on the table. Do that now.

If the name of your city is extra long, don't worry, just deal all the cards you're holding.

Have you done that? Good. If you're still holding cards in your hand, turn those face-down again, and just drop them on top of the packet. Now you probably have face-up and face-down cards in the same pile. And they've been mixed up in a specific way, depending on the cities we picked.

Pick up that pile and hold it in your hands. Of course, I have no idea how you just mixed those cards. But I want to point out that all of this dealing and mixing has changed the order of the cards. So I want you to deal the cards, one-by-one, from the top, into a pile, dealing your secret number again. Some cards are face-down, some are face-up. Deal exactly the number of cards that represents your secret number.

Did you do that? Good. Look at the card on top of the pile. If it's not already face-up, turn it over. And you'll notice that it's not your card. You see, the cards have been well mixed. You can leave that card face-up or face down. Turn over the packet on the table. And then drop the cards in your hand on top; don't turn them over.

The packet is now a mess of face-up and face-down cards, and you've mixed them up based on the city you're imagining. I don't have any idea where your card started, and I don't have any idea how you mixed them up. So this will be a very challenging mental experiment.

I'm going to imagine myself in Chicago, standing on the street. Someone is walking towards me. It's someone who has just arrived from a different city. That person is holding up a playing card.

It's almost as if I can see that card. In our imaginations, we can make an astral connection. Start dealing

cards from the top of the packet onto the table. Don't worry if they're face-up or face-down. Deal ten of them on the table, then stop.

Have you done that? It's strange, because I imagine that you're signaling to me that your card is not one of those ten cards. Don't bother looking at them. The astral impression is very strong.

Deal one more card onto the table. And then a second one. Stop there. It's not those two cards.

You've given me a very strong impression, from one imaginary city to the next. I want you to take the next card, on the top of the packet in your hands. Take a look at it. That's exactly the card that you selected, the card that was at your secret number. The odds were one-to-twenty against me, but we did it! All the way from Chicago!

If you're performing the trick over the phone, have the spectator finish the preparations (counting to his number a second time, then dropping the rest of the packet on top). Then have him deal cards, one-by-one, from the top, telling you the identity of each card. The thirteenth card will always be the selected card, and you stop him when he names it.

3. THIRTY-FIVEISM

One of Eddie Joseph's most incredible creations was his elegant improvement on Jasonism, which he titled Astral Sense, from *Card Magic of the Mind* (Abbott's, 1952). It's perfect for performance in front of a group of people, and the trick is nothing short of a miracle, especially in an impromptu setting. Here the Jasonism

principle virtually works itself, by making just a few observations. Thirty-Fiveism is my formal procedure and a presentation for the original Astral Sense. Don't neglect this effect.

Can you keep a secret? Of course you can. But the history of humanity is a history of secrets that were kept, and then secrets that were mysteriously discovered. Sometimes secrets are blabbed. That's not very mysterious. But more often than not, secrets have a way of revealing themselves. I'm going to ask you to keep a secret. You're going to make a decision, decide upon a secret number. And you'll do everything possible so that I don't discover it. Here's the surprising part. If I get this right, if I can get the correct mental vibrations, I won't need to know your secret number; I'm going to discover the whole secret.

Do you have a deck of cards?

It's always better if the deck is borrowed. Be sure that it's a full deck, without any jokers. Have the cards shuffled.

I'd like to have someone step up here and help me. This will be all about your choices. If I'm successful, it's because I made a mental connection to you. If I fail, it's because you're great at keeping secrets. I'd like you to think of a number, your secret number. A number between, let's say, one and thirty. I want to limit you to about half the deck of cards, so think of a number between one and thirty. Have you got it? That's your secret. I'm never going to discover that number. But I'll try to do something even more amazing.

I'm going to deal through these cards, and I want you to remember the card that happens to fall at your number. Don't stop me when you see your card. Don't react in any way. Put on your best poker face and just look at the cards as I deal through them. I won't cheat. I won't look at you. I'm going to just look at the cards.

Here you deal cards from the top, one-by-one, turning each card face-up and dealing into a single pile on the table. As you deal, you count off each card.

That's the first card. Two. Three. Four....

You continue to count, until you've reached the thirtieth card. As you pause and look up at the spectator, you say:

Have you thought of one? And you'll remember it?

You then quickly deal five more cards. There are now exactly thirty-five cards in a pile face-up on the table. You take note of the bottom card, the last card dealt. This is your key card. We'll say, for this example, that it's the Six of Hearts.

You'll see that I'm cutting the cards, so we're mixing the order. Now your card isn't where you just thought it was.

The cards on the table are turned face-down and the rest of the deck is put on top of it, completing the cut.

That means that a new card is now at your secret number. Since you're good at keeping secrets, I'm going to turn my back. I want you to turn your back to everyone, and quietly deal cards off the top of the pack. Deal them one-by-one, into a pile. And I want you to deal exactly your secret number. Do it quietly so that no one knows how many cards you've dealt.

Have you done that? Good. Square up that pile of cards on the table, and hold the rest of the cards in your hands.

Here you instruct another spectator to stand and help you.

I'd like you to step over to the table, look at the top card on the pile, the card he's just dealt. Remember it, then put it back on top of the pile.

Have you done that? Good.

Now you address the first man again:

Take all the rest of the cards in your hand and drop them on top. Square up the deck and hold it in your hands.

The second spectator is invited to return to his seat.

This is what I mean about keeping secrets. You have a secret number. You've thought of a secret card. And then, using your secret number, this gentleman thought of a different secret card. Neither of you knows what the other person knows. And for some strange reason, I seem to know less than anyone else here. Let's see if I can change that.

Addressing the spectator holding the deck:

I'd like you to hold the deck face-down in your hands, and start to deal cards off the top, dropping them on the floor.

Mentally count until the spectator has dropped ten cards.

Stop! If I told you that the next card was your card, you might be surprised. But it isn't. Your card is exactly seven cards from the top of the deck. How could I know that? After all, you shuffled the cards, and you thought of the card at your own number. Maybe it's just intuition. Maybe it's just a guess. Seven cards. Count them with me, dropping the cards one-by-one. One... Two... Three... Four... Five... Six... stop right there. Tell me the name of your card. And turn over the next card.

The spectator finds his card.

Now you take the remaining cards from the spectator and invite him to sit down. You spread the cards face-up, showing them to the second spectator. As you spread them, look for your key card (in our example, the Six of Hearts), and note the card just above it in the face-up packet. This is the second spectator's card. Once you glimpse it, turn your attention to the second spectator.

Do you see your card in this half of the pack? It really is there? Good, then take these cards and shuffle them. I don't want to know where your card might be. You're keeping one more secret, and I'm going to make one more guess. Just one guess. Let's see how I do.

Take the packet back and spread the cards towards your face. Pull out the spectator's selection, which you've just glimpsed. Place it face-down in his hand, then have him name his card before he turns it over.

The second deal of the secret number re-sets the spectator's selection in the proper position. According to this formula (dealing 35 cards at the start), the first selection will always be 17 (52 minus 35) from the top, and the key card will always fall on top (in a face-down packet) of the second selection.

4. THE WHAMMY

Believe it or not, the spectator performs an Ace Assembly, under directions from the magician, through the medium of the telephone, radio, or video. The shuffle is another variation on the shuffle from Enigmatic Poker.

Considering that they know all the odds, and often know how to cheat, it's strange that the most superstitious people in the world are gamblers. Many gamblers believe in pure luck. They think that certain people bring luck. It might be a pretty girl, or a colorful old man. But they become convinced that they can't play successfully unless that person is watching the game. That person is called the whammy, because they might just put the whammy on the game at the most important moment.

I don't know if any of that is true, but it is true that certain people have all the luck. They don't need to cheat, because the luck always favors them. You probably know people like that. You might even be one of those people.

The rest of us live our lives trying to figure out how to get more luck, using special rituals or lucky charms. Let's find out if you've got the skills of a whammy. I'm going to have you play an imaginary game of cards. And we'll see if you can put the whammy on the cards. You know it can't be me, because I'll be all the way on the other side of this telephone line. So get a deck of cards now. I'll wait.

Have you got them? Good. I want you to take out the four aces. And lay them, face-down, in a row in front of you. Have you done that? You have four aces, face-down on the table? Perfect. Take the rest of the cards, and deal three cards on top of each ace. So now you've got four piles of four cards. You can put the rest of the deck aside. We won't be using it.

I want you to keep the piles neatly squared, but put one on top of another, and then keep stacking them, so that all four piles are in assembled into one pile.

Good. Give that packet a cut, and complete the cut, just as if you were playing a real card game.

I'm going to have you shuffle that packet, but first wait and listen to my instructions. We're going to use a special shuffle that turns some of the cards face-up. So pick up the packet in your hand. And deal cards off the top, into a pile on the table. Deal any number of cards, between one and ten. Deal them neatly in a pile.

Have you done that? Good. You still have cards in your hand, right? Take those cards in your hand, turn the packet face-up, and drop it on top of the cards on the table.

Pick up the whole packet. Cut it. And complete the cut.

I want you to do that once more. Deal out cards, one by one, in a packet on the table. Any number, up to ten. When you're finished, take the cards in your hand, turn them all over, and then drop that packet on top. You'll see

that some are face-up, some face-down.

There's a technical name for this. It's called a mess. Go ahead and give the cards one more cut, and complete the cut.

Let's see if you can overcome the mess by displaying a little bit of good luck. I'd like you to take the cards in your hands and deal out four hands of cards. Just deal four on the table in a row. Then go back and deal a second card on top of each card, then a third, and a fourth. Some cards will be face-up, and some face-down.

You should imagine that you're dealing out four hands of cards. Of course, I don't know how you mixed the cards. You picked the number of cards that were turned over, and then you cut them randomly. But I'm hoping that you can put the whammy on the cards, and give a winning hand to one player. You may have noticed one or two aces get dealt. Pick up a packet with an ace in it, and turn all these cards face-up.

You actually did it, didn't you? You dealt someone all four aces! You thought that you were making random choices, but there's one logical explanation. You were secretly, subconsciously making all the right moves, because you're secretly a whammy!

5. THE COWBOY SECRET

This surprising and highly unusual puzzle surely originated in an older routine, but it recently appeared in a Montana bar over glasses of beer, where my friend was lucky enough to witness it, and take note of the sequence. After tracing it back to one local resident, my friend asked the source. "It's a secret. It's an old

cowboy trick," he was told. It's amazing live; it's amazing via telephone or electronic media.

For centuries playing cards have been used for games, but for even longer, they've been used to tell fortunes and predict the future. And that's sort of perfect, isn't it? Those little rectangles of cardboard might tell your fortune, and they might make your fortune. But one way or another, you're holding the answer in your hands.

I'm not going to tell you that cards can really tell you the future. But I can absolutely show you how a deck of cards has the power to predict future events, in very weird ways. In order to demonstrate this, I'm going to give you all the instructions. You'll perform it, so you know I'm not doing anything tricky. You'll need a full deck of cards. All 52 cards, so that you're not restricting yourself from any potential results. But we won't need any jokers, so if there are jokers in the deck, take those out and put them aside. Get the cards now.

Do you have them? Great. You'll also need a coin. That will represent good fortune. So take a coin out of your pocket, and we'll use it in a moment.

Begin by shuffling the cards, to make sure they're really mixed up.

I want you to hold the cards in your hands, face-down. Take the top card of the deck, turn it face-up, and deal it onto the table. That card has a value of something between one, ace, to thirteen, the king. Remember, the jack is eleven, the queen is twelve, the king is thirteen. I want you to deal cards, face-up, on top of that card, going from the value of the card up to thirteen. In other words, if you dealt a ten, you'd deal one card on top, counting eleven, then another, twelve, and another, counting thirteen. Do that now, starting with the value of the card on the table.

Good. Square those cards up and turn over that whole packet on the table, so it's face-down.

Do that again, dealing one card from your hand, face-up. And deal cards on top of it until you reach thirteen. When you're finished, turn that whole packet over, so you have another packet of cards face-down on the table.

Now keep doing that. Do as many packets as you can. Each time you can make a packet of cards go to

thirteen, turn them over on the table and start again. You should end up with five or six packets. Maybe even more. When you can't make a full packet of cards, when you don't have enough cards in your hand to complete the packet, just take all those remaining cards and hold them face-down in your hand. Those are the left-over cards.

Actually, I'm about to prove to you that those left-over cards are very important. They're about to predict what you're going to do.

So listen closely to my instructions. You now have a number of face-down packets in front of you, and I'm going to guess that you don't remember the top card of any specific pile, since you've dealt so many of them. Pick up the coin, and drop it on top of any face-down pile. It's completely your free choice.

And now, using the cards remaining in your hand, we're going to actually predict the card that's under the coin. Sounds amazing, doesn't it?

I want you to turn over the top cards of any two piles remaining on the table. Just turn two cards face-up so you can see them. And now, take all the remaining face-down piles, the ones without the coin, and pick them up, adding them to the cards in your hand.

So let's just make sure where we are: You're holding a packet of cards in your hand, and there are three piles on the table. Two have cards face-up, and one has a coin on top.

I want you to deal cards, from your hand, down onto the table. Deal exactly ten cards.

Have you done that? Now keep dealing cards on the same pile, dealing the number of cards showing on one of the face-up piles. It's going to be a number between one and thirteen. Have you done that? Good. Keep dealing, and you're going to deal the number of cards showing on the second pile of cards.

You've still got some cards left in your hand, don't you? I want you to count those cards. Count them very

carefully. How many are left? Here's the incredible part: the cards in your hands are telling you the value of the card that is just under the coin. Push the coin aside, and turn over the card.

It's the same number that you just counted!

You shuffled the cards, you dealt them out in your own configuration, you picked which card would get the coin, and which cards would be turned over and counted off. But the amazing part is that you were actually holding the answer in your hands!

6. HACER LO IMPOSIBLE

Eddie Joseph's manuscript, *Impossible* (1952), published by Abbott's, was issued with a misspelling, *Imposible*, on the title page. Perhaps this mistake frustrated the publishers; perhaps, the original *Impossible* routine was slightly fidgety and prone to misinterpretation. It's a shame that it's been out of print and neglected. It's an astonishing piece of magic which, I'm told, was a favorite of George Boston, Tony Randall, and Johnny Carson. This version uses Joseph's basic principle with a much more direct handling.

It is a completely hands-off trick, and ideally suited to a borrowed deck. Because of this, it can be performed live, impromptu, or through the use of media. But the effect is really only manageable if it's being performed for two different spectators at the same time. In other words, you'll need an audience of (at least) two.

One of the most magical things we can experience is a coincidence. You know, two separate events that are somehow linked in some surprising, incredible way. I'm sure that you've had this experience, and then had the

feeling of a chill running down your spine.

The American author, Charles Fort, suspected that there might not be coincidences. Maybe these things are really connected in ways that we can't perceive. Scientists and psychologists have tried to study the phenomena. But how do you measure a coincidence? The unexpected doesn't really fit in a laboratory.

I'll tell you how you measure it. Right now, I'm going to have two of you engage in an experiment. And at the end of it, you're going to experience a coincidence. You can decide if it's really a coincidence. Maybe it can't be a coincidence, because I just told you that it was going to happen.

So we need some random elements. I'd like you to use a deck of cards. Get a deck. Be sure that it's a full deck, and pull out the jokers or any extra cards, so you just have 52 cards. Do that now.

Have you done it? Good. Shuffle the cards. And divide the deck in half. You'll do that by dealing off exactly 26 cards, dealing them into a pile on the table. Do that now. Put the rest of the cards down on the table.

There are two of you participating in this experiment, and two piles of cards on the table, two halves of the deck. I want you to each pick up your packets, and give them a shuffle, so they're really mixed up.

I'm going to ask you to each cut your packets into two separate piles. But just to make this interesting, try to make the packets different, so that one packet has more, and one has less. That way, we know we're working with different numbers.

Put one packet right next to the other packet. So let's check. We have two people participating. And each one of you has cut your packets into two piles, side-by-side.

Each one of you, pick up one of your packets, either one, and hold it in your hands face-down. Good. Look at the top card, and remember it. Then put it back on the top again.

Now I want each of you to pick up the other person's packet that's on the table, and put it on top of your packet in your hands. In other words, you're taking different cards, and different numbers of cards, than you started with. Square up the cards in your hands. And now, one of you hand your half to the other person. Put those cards on top, and square them all up again. And now, give them a cut, and complete the cut.

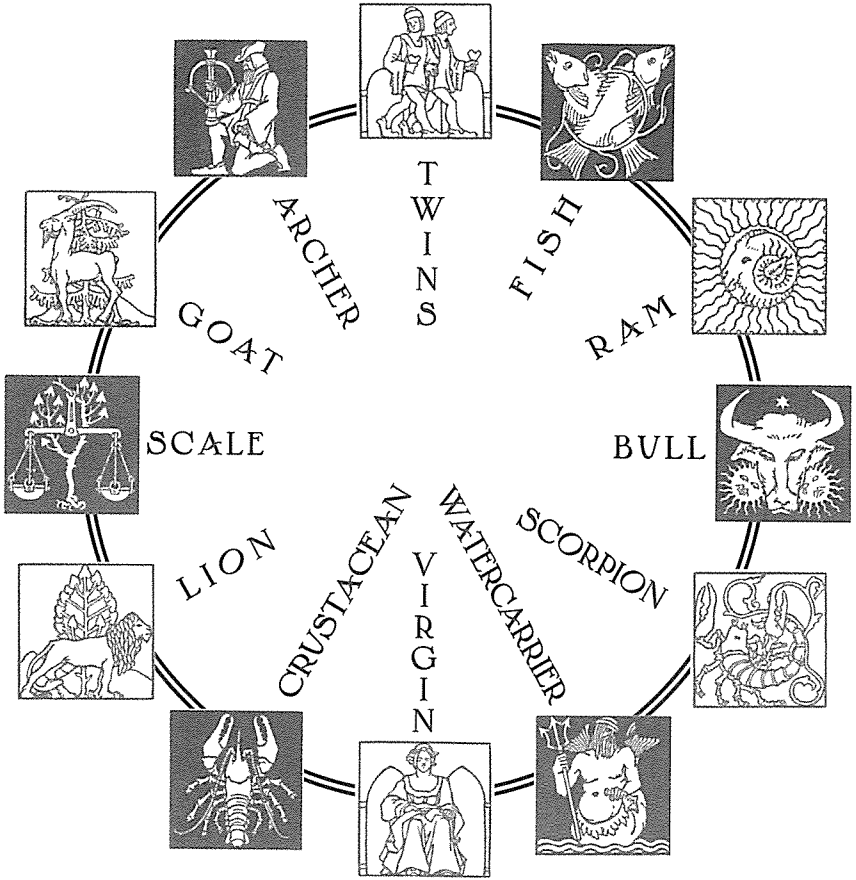
So one of you is holding the deck in your hands.

Remember, I had you cut the deck into different sized packets, and you reassembled the packets in a different order, with different amounts of cards. So right now, two selected cards are lost somewhere in the middle. Give them one more cut. Complete the cut. And now take the deck and deal down, in a pile, twenty-six cards, right off the top of the deck. Deal them in a pile, face-down, one on top of the other.

You see, what we just did was separate the deck, randomly, into halves again. Turn either half face-up.

Good. And now, I want one of you to take the face-up half, and one of you to take the face-down half. And deal cards, one-by-one together. Deal a face-up card, and at the same time, a face-down card. Then a second card from each half. And a third. Keep dealing them together that way, synchronized. When either one of you sees your card going by face-up, stop dealing. Do you understand? You're watching the face-up pile. As soon as one of you sees your card, face-up, just call out "Stop!"

Good. I promised you a coincidence, and here it is. You shuffled, you cut, you mixed the cards randomly, you cut the cards again. Look at the face-down card that you dealt at precisely the same spot as the face-up card. There they are. Both cards, both selections, dealt exactly together! The odds are one in twenty-six. I'd call that a coincidence, but I could also say that I just felt a chill down my spine!


TWINS
FISH
RAM
BULL
SCORPION
WATERCARRIER
VIRGIN
CRUSTACEAN
LION
SCALE
GOAT
ARCHER

7. THE ZODIAC WHEEL

The attractive zodiac on the following page has been specially arranged to perform a mystery.

I'd like you to look over all of the symbols, and then place your finger on one of them. It doesn't have to be the zodiac symbol of your birthday. In fact, I'd prefer if you pick one at random.

Now I'd like you to spell the description of that symbol, moving your finger clockwise around the circle, one space for each letter. That's going to move you further around the circle. You might go all the way around the circle, or only part way. Now, wherever your finger ended up, please spell the word that describes that symbol as well. This way we'll be able to confirm your random choice. Do that now, moving around the circle, one space for each letter.

Your finger ended up on a symbol. Keep your finger right there.

You're concentrating on a sign that will bring you good luck. It's the sign of social interaction, of quick intellect and a desire for peace. I can tell that it's Aquarius, the sign of the Watercarrier. Isn't it?

The patter is written to explain the circumstance in which "Watercarrier" is selected twice; that is, in which the first spelling takes the spectator completely around the wheel. Due to the arrangement of letters and symbols, the two spellings guarantees that any choice will be moved to the Watercarrier.

8. INVOKING MARGERY

An effective "hands-off" mystery with three packets of cards, India Calling, appeared in Eddie Joseph's book, *Eddie's Card Bonanza* (Abbott's, 1950). This version, invoking the memory of the notorious medium, is based on his original principle.

Through his life, the great Houdini had a lot of competitors, but no real competition. However, he did have an enemy. He was determined to prove that a Spiritualist medium, a Boston socialite named Margery, was a fake. She was determined to embarrass Houdini in the seance room. Today historians are still debating exactly what happened during those seances in 1924. Skeptics were convinced that Houdini was triumphant. Believers were convinced that Margery won.

We do know that many psychics considered Margery a hero, and for over fifty years, some thought that just evoking her name caused amazing things to happen. I'll show you exactly what I mean.

You're going to need a deck of cards. Please go get those now, and give them a shuffle. Tell me when you've got the cards.

Good. We're not going to use them all. Deal ten cards face-down in a pile on the table. And then, next to that pile, deal another ten cards. You're going to end up with two piles of cards, exactly ten cards in each pile. Tell me when you've done that.

Good. Put the rest of the deck aside. We won't use those.

Pick up one of your piles, either one, and give them a shuffle. We're going to make the piles uneven. You'll see

why in a minute. So take the pile in your hands, and deal three cards from the top, onto the pile that's on the table. Keep the rest of the cards in your hands.

Of the remaining cards in your hands, I'd like you to cut that pile into two uneven piles. In other words, one pile will have more cards than the other. When you've done that, take those two smaller piles, and put one of them on either side of the pile on the table.

So let's check. You've now got three piles of cards in a row. There's a small pile on the left. A big pile in the middle. And another small pile on the right. Because we mixed up the cards that way, working with odd numbers and cutting them unevenly, each of those piles has a different amount of cards.

Pick up the pile on the right side and count the number of cards in it. Don't tell me how many there are. Just remember that number. Put that pile back on the table, to the right.

Now pick up the center pile, and without changing the order of any of the cards, count down to the number you just remembered, the number of cards in the pile to the right. Look at the card at that number from the top. Have you got it? Good, square up the cards, so that your selected card is still at that number.

And now put the center pile back on the table.

You've just picked a card in a completely random manner. I don't know how you mixed the cards or cut the cards, so I don't know which card you looked at. Pick up the pile on the left, and drop it on top of the center pile. Put it right on top, then square up all the cards.

Perfect! Now pick up the center pile, the piles that you just assembled. And drop these cards on top of the pile on the right. Square up all the cards again.

Somewhere in the middle of that pile is the card you selected. Since you made all the choices, I can't possibly know where it is. But believe it or not, Margery might know. Or, at least, if we invoke her name, the spirits might

give us some insight into its location. Hold the packet of cards in your hand, and deal one card, face-down in a pile, for each letter of her name. I'll spell her name. Deal one card for M. Then a second card on top of that one for A. Keep dealing. R...G...E...R...Y.

Stop right there. Put your hand on the last card you dealt. The card at the end of her name. Turn it over. That's the card you just thought of, isn't it?

9. PRESQUE VU

Performed impromptu for two spectators at the same time, this feat leaves nothing to be desired; it's difficult to imagine a more surprising and effective card revelation. Here one spectator effectively predicts the other spectator's free choice. Eddie Joseph's effect, Who Knows the Card?, originally appeared in *Eddie's Dumbfounders with Cards* (Abbott's, 1951). At the time it was published, the author reported that it has "fooled many good magicians."

Our minds play tricks on us. As a magician, I would be lucky to be able to create tricks as mystifying and unexpected as the tricks that occur inside our own heads. Maybe you've heard of presque vu (PRESS-kuh VOO). It's a term for those things that we almost remember, that we should remember, but are on the tips of our tongues. I can't do it as well as you can do it in your own head. But I'll give it a try.

In order to do this, I'm going to use this deck of cards, and I'll ask two different people to make mental selections of two different cards. So let's start by shuffling the deck. Please go ahead and do that.

Two spectators are asked to help. One of them is given a deck to shuffle. Or the deck can be borrowed, if there's a deck handy. The deck needs to be a full deck, without any jokers.

Now that the deck is completely shuffled, we're going to pick two cards. One will be picked by pure choice, by thinking of a number in the deck. And one will be picked by pure chance, by looking at a card that lands on the face.

Turning to the first man, you ask him to follow your instructions.

Please pick a number, so, in a moment, you'll select a card somewhere in the middle of the deck. Pick a number between 20 and 40, so you're sure to get a card in the middle. What number do you want?

Let's say, for example, that the spectator selects 22.

That's your choice. Now for the chance.

Turning away from the spectator who has just shuffled the cards, you continue.

You're going to pick a much smaller number, by chance. I'm not going to look. I want you to put the deck face-down on the table, cut the cards and complete the cut. Do that again, if you'd like. When you're satisfied that no one can know the card on the face of the deck, I want you to look at that card, and note its value. It's going to be a card between one, an ace, and thirteen, a king. Remember, a jack counts for eleven, a queen is twelve, a king is thirteen. Have you looked at that card?

Good. I want you to turn the deck face-down again, count down, and remember the card that is exactly at that number from the top. Don't change the order of any of the cards. Just remember the card at your secret number.

Have you done that? Good. I have one more instruction for you. Turn the cards face-up. And take away, from the face, the same number of cards, the number that you just noticed on the face. Once you've removed those cards from the face of the deck, I want you to put them in your pocket, or hide them behind your back. Are you

finished?

I asked you to do that because I want you to completely destroy the evidence of your secret number, so that no one can find your card.

This means that the selected card is still somewhere in the middle. I want you to see that.

Pick up the deck, without looking at the faces of any cards, and begin spreading them, from the top, so that both spectators can see them.

I'm not going to look, but as I spread thorough the cards, you'll see that your card is still in its original position.

As you spread the cards from the top, you begin counting, from the top card. Begin with the spectator's named number in your mind, in this case 22, and mentally count, assigning the value of 23 to the top card, 24 to the second card, 25 to the third card, et cetera. Mentally count down through the cards until you reach 52. Cut the deck at this point, and put the top packet face-down on the table.

If I cut the cards, it means that your card is moved. I don't know where it was. I don't know where it is. And even you don't know where it is now.

Continue spreading through the second packet, making several random cuts and dropping the packets on top of the cards on the table. The first of these nonchalant cuts accomplishes the trick.

You ask the first spectator, who began by naming a number between twenty and forty, and who selected 22, to step up to the table.

Do you remember the number you selected? 22? Good. I'd like you to square up the deck, take it in your hands, and count down to 22. Count them out loud.

As he reaches 22, have him stop.

Put the 22nd card right there, on top of the pile.

Turning to the first spectator, you say:

You have to admit, it would be a fantastic trick if I could tell you what card you thought of, by chance? I can't.

Then, turning to the second spectator, you continue:

And it would be a miracle if I could tell you what card you just chose, there on the table, wouldn't it? I can't. I should be able to. Presque vu. It's there, on the tip of my tongue. But here's what's really amazing....

You turn and point to the first spectator.

It's on the tip of your tongue, too. In fact, you are the only person who can tell him exactly what card he selected. Really! For the first time, tell us what card you selected in the deck.

The first spectator names his card. When the second spectator turns his selection over, on the top of the pile, he discovers the same card.

10. THE TREASURE MAP

Based on a mathematical trick proposed by W. W. Rouse Ball, in his 1892 book, *Mathematical Recreations and Essays*, The Treasure Map is a simple and effective one-on-one trick using a borrowed deck. Begin by writing on a piece of paper, "Hold the cards face-down. Dig down to the 16th card from the top." Fold this prediction and carry it in your pocket.

I'm going to try to show you what a mind reader can do. Or maybe I'm going to show you what a pirate can do. You're going to find something, purely by chance. And then I'm going to do my best to steal it away and hide

it, just like a pirate hides a bag of gold. In fact....

Here you take the prediction from your pocket.

I've already written out a treasure map, so that we don't lose anything. That's what treasure maps were for, of course, to remind the pirates if they forgot. Keep that folded up. I'm going to ask you to look at it later.

Take these cards and give them a shuffle.

The cards can be borrowed. For this trick, it does not need to be a complete deck.

When you're finished, I want you to think of a number. Not too big. Think of a number between one and twelve. In a moment, I'm going to turn away. You should take the deck, turn it face-up, like this, and look at the card that is exactly that number from the face of the deck. I'm sure you understand. If you thought of three, you'd look at the third card. Then square up the cards again and put them on the table, so I don't have a clue what card you saw or where it is. Go ahead and do that now.

You look away. Or, if you're sitting at a table, the spectator can drop the cards to his lap and find the selection.

Do you remember the card? And do you remember the number? Perfect.

This is a little like buried treasure. At a precise measurement, you've buried a single card that you're remembering. I'm going to try and find that card, without looking, and without knowing what it is.

You put the deck behind your back, or, if you're sitting at a table, you can hold the cards under the table.

I'm going to take one card and move it to my own secret hiding place.

When the cards are out of sight, you thumb off fifteen cards from the face of the deck (without changing their order) and cut this packet to the top of the deck (that it, the bottom of the deck if it's face-up). As soon as this is done, bring out the cards again.

First, let's see if I actually got the right card. For the first time, tell me, what number were you thinking of?

The spectator tells you his number. We'll say that it's nine.

Good. And that means that you looked at the ninth card from the face? Let's see if it's still there.

Dealing from the face of the deck, deal nine cards in a pile on the table. When you deal the ninth card, ask the spectator:

Is that your card?

It won't be.

Good. I got it. Don't tell me what your card was. Let's see if I put it in the right spot, according to my treasure map. Open up the paper and read what it says.

As the spectator opens the paper, you drop the remaining, face-up deck atop the packet of nine cards on the table. Then square up the deck. The spectator reads, "Hold the cards face-down. Dig down to the 16th card from the top." Offer the deck to the spectator, instructing him to turn it over, so he's counting down from the top.

He deals exactly 16 cards. Have him name his card. Instruct him to turn over the 16th card, and he'll find his selection.

11. NEGATIVE SPELLER

Derived from R.W. Hull's Joker Speller in *The Encyclopedia of Card Tricks*, this trick seems to work perfectly when the magician spells the cards, but the joker always turns up when the spectator tries it. Negative Speller uses several "negative message" cards to keep surprising, and a finish that adds another smile. It's not

quite magic, but an amusing interlude with an assistant from the audience.

Use a jumbo or standard sized cards. Pull the Ace through 9 of different suits. You'll also need five additional cards, which need to be turned into blank cards and then need writing to turn them into the negative messages.

You can make blank cards by using fine steel wool and carefully rubbing off the printed pips on the face. These five words are then penned on the cards. Pay attention to the way the words are formed. They are slightly haphazard, a mix of upper and lower case. There are five lettered cards; the "Not" card can be read as "Ten" when reversed. (The illustration, page 32, shows this reversed card at the top.)

Mark each message card, on the back, so that you can instantly see how you should hold them up so they're upright. (This is particularly helpful when you reveal the "Not" card.) And then, when the cards are stacked, write the order of the stacked cards (1 to 14) in pencil in the corners of the cards on the back. This allows you to easily stack them just before a show.

Here's the stack of cards, from the top, face-down card, to the face card on the bottom.

Top: 9, 7, 6, Error, Nope, 8, 5, Not, Nein, Ace, Wrong, 4, 3, 2: Bottom

The stack is set up to begin with two quick overhand shuffles. Hold the packet on the long sides (if they're jumbo cards) or on the short sides for regular cards, and perform a standard overhand shuffle; run three cards (shift the top three cards, one on top of the other), and then throw the rest (putting the remaining packet on top of these three). Square the cards and repeat this action, running three and throwing.

Through the routine, avoid flashing the bottom card, as this will sometimes show a message card. Each time a card is located, the word is spelled (not counted, spelled), transferring one card from the top to the bottom for each letter. The next card on the top will be the card turned over. And in each case, when a real card, or a negative message card is seen, it is placed aside before you continue, so the packet keeps getting smaller.

Very often magicians aren't given credit for their contributions to society. For example, magicians were responsible for some of the very first motion pictures. And they were also some of the first people to develop the idea of programming. Really! Today, we write programs for computers. But a hundred years ago, magicians discovered playing cards for programming. They would place cards in a particular order, so even if they were shuffled or mixed, the magician could use those cards, in a sequence, to find specific solutions. Today we call that programming. Back then, I guess it was called cheating. Actually, the technical term was "stacking the deck." I'll show you exactly how that worked. I'll give them one more shuffle....

Pick up the packet of cards and give them a casual shuffle. (This is the shuffle sequence described above. Run three and throw; run three and throw.)

So I have a hunch that I've arranged these cards perfectly. I've programmed them, so that I can find any card that I want. Once the program is in place, it always works. I'll show you. If I want to find the Ace, I just spell the cards this way. A, C, E.

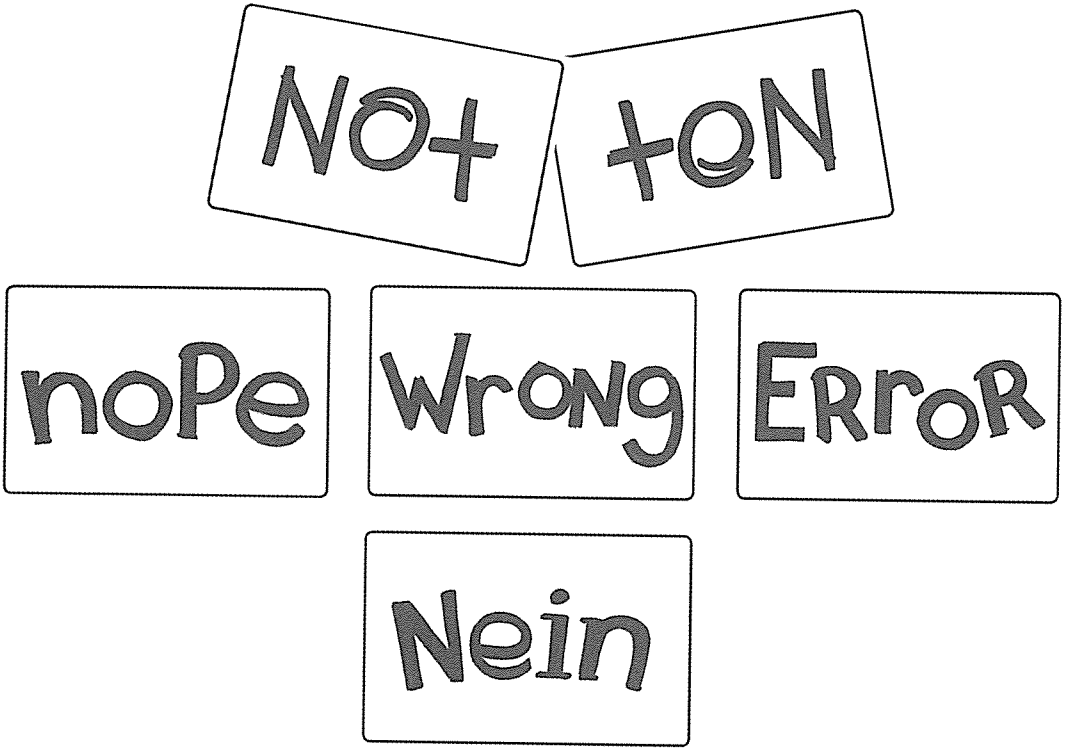
You shift one card, from the top to the bottom, for each letter. Turn up the next top card, showing the Ace. Put this card to the side.

I'll do it again. If I need the Two, I just call for it. T, W, O.

Transfer three cards from top to bottom, as before, then turn over the next card, showing the Two.

Now I know what you're thinking. How talented must this guy be? After all, he knows exactly how to spell the names of those cards, and then he finds them. I'll let you in on a secret. Anyone can do it. Really! Since the cards are programmed, it almost works by itself. Let me show you. Is there someone here today who would like to play the part of the magician?

Invite a boy from the audience to join you onstage. Hand him the face-down packet.


NOt
tON
noPe
Wrong
ERroR
Nein

Do it exactly the same way I did it. Spell the name of the next card, the Three. Just move cards from the top to the bottom as I spell it out loud. T, H, R, E, E. Good. And now turn over the next card.

When the boy turns over the card, it is printed with the word, "Error."

Oh, I know what happened. It much have been a bug in the program. You see, the word Three and the word Error spell with the same number of letters. Let me just get rid of that card.

Toss the "Error" card aside and take the packet back from the boy.

Now demonstrate, spelling "T, H, R, E, E," and turning over the next card, the Three. This is set aside.

That card is out of the way, so try it again, this time with the Four.

The packet is handed back to the boy. Spell "F, O, U, R" as the boy shifts cards. He ends up with a card that spells, "Nope." Set this card aside.

Don't worry about it. It could have happened to anybody. You see, the word Four and the word Nope can be spelled with the same number of letters. Let me try.

Now you successfully spell the word Four, (putting the card aside), and then similarly spell Five, and Six.

It seems to be working perfectly now. Take the packet in your own hands and spell the next card, Seven.

When the boy moves the cards, spell, "S, E, V, E, N," he shows a card lettered, "Wrong."

I can't understand why you keep running into those glitches. You must have gotten Wrong because it has the same letters as Seven.

The "Wrong" card is set aside and you take the packet back. Spell the word Seven, then Eight. Hand the packet back to the volunteer. Now there are only a few cards in the packet.

Spell Nine. N, I, N, E. That's great. Turn over the next card.

But it's the word, "Nein."

Pretty close. Actually, it is pronounced, "Nine." But I think that technically that's an error message. In German.

Take the packet back, quickly spell "N, I, N, E," shifting the last two cards, and turning over the next card to show the Nine.

That leaves just one more card. That's the Ten. I spell, T, E, N.

When the last card is turned, it says, "Not."

I know what you're thinking. That's not the Ten. But if you look at it this way, it's not Not, it's Ten.

Turning the card over, it now seems to spell "Ten."

You may think it's Ten, or you may think it's Not, but this is obviously the only way I'm going to get through this program!

Thank the boy and invite him to return to his seat.

Here's the sequence of spelling, according to the routine that's just been described.

Shuffle: run three and throw. Run three and throw.
You spell Ace and Two.
Give the packet to the spectator. He fails with Three.
Take it back. Spell Three.
Give the packet to the spectator. He fails with Four.
Take it back. You spell Four, Five, Six.
Give the packet to the spectator. He fails with Seven.
Take it back. Spell Seven, Eight.
Give the packet to the spectator. He fails with Nine.
Take it back. Spell Nine. Then, with last card, Ten.

12. ELEMENTARY!

A bit of preparation will leave you with a very effective stand-up routine. Here the force of the cards seems completely impossible, and the mathematics utilized are completely disguised.

You'll need three packets of five cards each—fifteen cards. I suggest making them by gluing printed images on top of jumbo cards; they can be made even larger by starting with pieces of cardboard. The backs of the cards need some sort of design, or patterned paper. Here's the first packet. Each card should have a simple illustration of a face on it, with a name printed at the bottom. The names of the five victims are:

Kent, Hill, West, Palmer, Smith.

Then, there's the five weapons cards:

Pistol, Python, Dagger, Rope, Arsenic.

Finally, you'll need five more cards with faces of potential murderers:

Butler, Banker, Priest, Cook, Mayor.

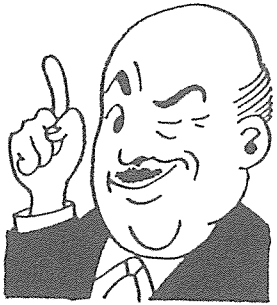
The three force cards, one in each packet, are each marked on the back. Mark them surreptitiously, but so that you can easily recognize the cards in their packets. Those three forces (shown on the next page) are:

Smith, Arsenic, Mayor.

You'll also need a dummy newspaper, printed with your own headline. You can print the headline using a computer and do a neat paste-up for the front page of the newspaper. The headline reads:

SMITH

ARSENIC



MAYOR

DR. SMITH MURDERED!

Detective Locates Arsenic

Mayor Confesses to Crime

How does it work? You'll note in the presentation that the spectators shuffle each packet of five cards. Using the mark, you'll need to cut the force card to the top (face-down) of each packet. There are several options to guarantee this, and these possibilities will be discussed at the end of the presentation. Note, when you follow this procedure, that each of the force cards must begin on the top of their respective face down packets.

A few magical powers go a long way. You can imagine how fantastic it might be if you were a private detective, and you could read someone's mind. That magical ability could make all the difference in the world.

Of course, there aren't many psychic crimes, or psychic detectives. Most murders have some sort of reasoning or logic behind them. Most murderers have thought long and hard about the crime, and that thinking is part of the motive. You'll notice that Sherlock Holmes is very good at figuring out the motive.

So that made me think, would it be possible to create a really random crime? To arrive at a victim, a murder weapon, a killer, by chance alone? And if it were really a random crime, a seemingly unsolvable crime, is it possible to solve that crime with a psychic advantage?

That's the sort of thing that might have fascinated Sherlock Holmes. So let's put together our own Sherlock Holmes mystery, right here on stage. I need three people to help me. A murderer, a victim, and a weapon. Don't worry. No one will actually get shot, no one will actually get convicted. No blood will be spilled. Well, maybe just a little bit. I've brought some newspaper, in case things get messy up here.

You take out the newspaper, opening it so that the headline isn't seen, and dropping it onto the stage. Invite three spectators from the audience to join you onstage. Let's say that it's two men and a woman. Arrange them in a line across the stage.

I'm going to give each of you some cards. You've got the list of potential victims.

The first packet of jumbo cards is given to the first man.

You've got the list of weapons.

The woman is given the second packet.

And you have the names of the potential victims. If you want, turn the cards over and take a look. Those of you who are mathematically inclined will notice that, by randomly picking one of each, there's a potential for 125 different crime combinations. Let's begin this way. Turn all your cards face-down. And then shuffle them between your hands, mixing them up so that you, yourself, don't have any idea which card is now on the bottom of the packet.

Now that you've mixed them, I'm going to ask you to give the cards a simple cut. We're not changing the order, but simply cutting a new card to the bottom. Here's how we're going to pick the cards. We're going to turn the packet face-up. We'll eliminate that card. And then we'll spell the next card we see. We eliminate the card on the face and spell the next card. And we'll keep doing that until you have only one card left in your hand. I'll show you how it works.

Step next to the man with the victim cards. Here's an example of how the cards are handled.

Turn your packet face-up. The card on the face is Hill. Let's discard Miss Hill.

You take this card away.

Of course, Miss Hill may have been endangered, owing to her rather wanton love life. But she was fortunate to be away from the country estate, buying a new dress for the party. And thus, her life was spared.

Now point out that the next card showing is Palmer. Spell Palmer, instructing the spectator to move one card from the top to the bottom for each letter. When the name P,A,L,M,E,R has been spelled, the card on the face is, for example, Professor West.

Professor West, of course, was the victim of a number of academic rivalries, especially when he published that fascinating theory about Zulu natives and their poisonous spear tips. But Professor West was also an inveterate bird watcher. He was not in the country house. He was watching for the Yellow Bellied Sapsucker.

Take the West card and put it aside. The next card is Mr. Kent. The spectator spells K,E,N,T. That shows Mr. Palmer.

Happily, Mr. Palmer managed to duck out at the last minute to empty his pipe, and saved his own life.

Mr. Palmer is taken away. That shows Dr. Smith. Spelling S,M,I,T,H, the card Mr. Kent is shown.

Mr. Kent was hired to be in the house that afternoon. He should have repairing the wainscoting in the ballroom. But unfortunately, he was being paid by the hour, not by the board foot. I know for a fact that he was taking a nap on the porch.

That leaves the card for Dr. Smith.

It was kindly Dr. Smith who the murderer encountered in the country house. He was reading in the library when the murderer entered the house, sneaking up behind him.

Show the Smith card and dismiss the first spectator.

Remember, you were the one who arranged the cards, so you determined their order, you determined which ones would be eliminated, and who would be murdered. Tonight, it was kindly Dr. Smith.

Move to the next spectator. The procedure is repeated, so the weapons are each eliminated with an arch line of patter. For example:

The murderer planned on using the python, but it happened to slither away just as he reached for it, leaving him empty handed.

The weapons are removed—pistol, dagger, rope, python—leaving arsenic.

When in doubt, a few drops in a fine claret always does the trick.

The second spectator, the woman, is dismissed. Finally, move on to the spectator holding the packet of murderers. Using the same "discard, then spell" procedure, eliminate the cook, priest, banker and butler, giving each one an alibi as the cards are taken away.

Yes, it's sad but true. The mayor realized that Dr. Smith knew the truth about his gout, and if he had explained what he knew, he could have ruined his political career. The only solution was to kill him!

You see, a crime only really makes sense when you give it the right sounding motives.

Take the last card from the spectator and point out how they've just constructed the perfect crime, because it was randomly constructed.

It's the sort of problem that would have fascinated Sherlock Holmes.

As the final man is asked to take his seat again, stop him.

I wonder if you'd do me a favor? Before we began, I put a newspaper on the ground. We didn't need it. No blood gets splattered from a poisoning. But it might interest you to take a look at that headline.

The spectator picks up the newspaper and hands it to the magician, who opens it to the front page. There he reveals the headline:

DR. SMITH MURDERED!

Detective Locates Arsenic

Mayor Confesses to Crime

As long as the force card is on the top of the face-down packet (the bottom as it's turned face-up), the discard and spelling procedure will end up on the force. The sequence, again, is: Discard the face card. Spell the next card, moving one card from face to back for each letter. Then discard the face card. Spell the next card....

In terms of getting the marked force card to the top (face-down) of each packet, take advantage of the situations. The card may end up on top, and you'll see the mark there. Or you may encourage the spectator to cut the packet. If this fails, ask the spectator to touch one of the cards in the middle, to cut the packet. If he touches the marked card, you cut the packet there. If he touches a card next to the marked card, you slide this card to the bottom and, in the course of this action, you cut the marked card to the top. Notice that you can emphasize the selection of the bottom card, pointing out that this first card is the one that is randomly chosen and is the first card discarded. By offering the spectator a chance to determine the bottom card, randomly, you are apparently offering a free choice for the sequence of eliminations.

This is the Fifth Book in the series:

Impuzzibilities (2002)
Further Impuzzibilities (2006)
Subsequent Impuzzibilities (2010)
Ensuing Impuzzibilities (2013)
Treacherous Impuzzibilities (2014)

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